(b) if so, the details of the operative observations made by the MRTPC; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government in view of the judgement of MRTPC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURA GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) No, Sir. However, a notice of enquiry has bee received by IGL from MRTP Commission on the allegation of profit making throug monopolistic practices. The matter is subjudice and the first hearing is fixed on 27.5.200 before the MRTP Commission.

Ban on small cylinders

3052. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAI GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he is aware that domestic LPG is transferred to 1-2 kg small cylinder i various States such as Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal;

(b) if so, the steps taken to stop this illegal activity; and

(c) the steps taken to ban the sale of small cylinder which are manufactured illegally?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAI GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) The possibility of diversion of subsidized domesti LPG cylinders by some unscrupulous elements cannot be ruled out due to the wide ga between the retail price of LPG for domestic use and the market price for commercial LPG

In order to stop diversion of domestic LPG cylinders, the Government has enacte "Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000" (Contro Order) and formulated "Marketing Discipline Guidelines, 2001" which provides for pena action against LPG distributors indulging in diversion/blackmarketing of LPG. The Contro Order also specifies the size and specifications of cylinders which can be used for sale o domestic LPG.

Whenever OMCs receive complaints, these are investigated and if the complaint is established, suitable action is taken against the LPG distributor(s) in accordance with the provisions of the Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG). MDG provides for following action against the distributor:—

— Fine of Rs. 20,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 1st offence.

— Fine of Rs. 50,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 2nd offence.

— Termination of the distributorship for 3rd offence.

In addition to the action taken by the OMCs, State Governments are empowered under the LPG (Regulation of Supply & Distribution) Order, 2000 promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to take action against blackmarketing/diversion of domestic LPG. Similarly, the Weights and Measures Departments of the States/UTs initiate legal action against those LPG distributors diverting LPG cylinders. The State Governments have been alerted from time to time to take steps against the blackmarketing/diversion of domestic cylinders for unauthorized usage.

Government have issued advertisements cautioning the public that use of domestic LPG for non-domestic purposes is illegal, dangerous and against national interest. Through these

dvertisements, cooperation of the general public has also been sought to report any regularity/malpractice to the OMCs.

The officials of OMCs carry out random checks at distributors godowns, delivery points, s well as en-route to ensure that no misuse takes place. The distributors of OMCs are under rict instructions to check the weight of cylinders at their godowns before delivery, and only ylinders with the specified weight are to be delivered to the customers. The distributors ave also been instructed to ensure that the seals are verified and shown to the customers at ie time of delivery. In case any under-weight cylinder is received by the customer, such ylinders are replaced free of charge by the OMCs.

Russia's participation in refining sector

3053. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL AS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Moscow had discussed cooperation in the oil and gas sector during is visit to Moscow in December 2007;

(b) whether in the meeting both sides noted that India has emerged as a hub for refining in sia and Indian exports of refined petroleum products to some of the world's most ophisticated markets have reached $40 billion and the growing refining sector in India has ffered immense opportunities for Russian companies; and

(c) to what extent Russia has agreed to help to explore India's refining sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL AS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) During the visit of Minister of Petroleum and latural Gas to Russia from 25-27 November, 2007 it was agreed that the national oil ompanies of the two countries would cooperative in mutually beneficial projects in the ields of exploration and production, grassroot refineries, modernization of refineries, gas ased petrochemical plants, gas processing plants and participation in liquefied Natural Gas LNG) projects.

Closure of outlets by Reliance/Essar

3054. DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM ND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Reliance and Essar Groups have closed down about 900 utlets as they were runing into losses due to rising prices of crude oil;

(b) if so, whether Government is aware that these outlets are selling petrol and diesel at igher prices; and

(c) if so, whether Government would provide them level playing field and pass on subsidy r reduce duties so that consumers do not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL AS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has informed hat the sales at their retail outlets (ROs) are negligible due to selling price differential etween private and public sector ROs, leading to the closure of their ROs. EOL have not et decided to shutdown their ROs.